

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2205

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 7213

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAIR,PINS, IT
SUBJECT: SECURITY THREATS TO U.S. OR FOREIGN AIR CARRIERS:
POLICY AND PROCEDURES

REF: (A) STATE 078860/1 (B) ROME 19935

1. REF (A) ADVISED POSTS TO "INFORM THE DEPARTMENT" WHEN THERE IS INFORMATION INDICATING A SPECIFIC AND IMMINENT THREAT TO U.S.OR FOREIGN AIR CARRIERS. WHILE OUR HIJACK CONTINGENCY PLAN IS DESIGNED SO THAT IN THE CASE OF AN ACTUAL HIJACK, DEPARTMENT, AS WELL AS FAA WASHINGTON AND FAA BRUSSELS IS INFORMED, WE WONDER WHETHER INFORMATION INDICATING A SPECIFIC AND IMMINENT THREAT SHOULD ALSO BE RELAYED TO THE TWO FAA OFFICES OR SHOULD BE SENT FIRST TO DEPARTMENT FOR EVALUATION.

2. WITH RESPECT TO DISEMINATION OF HIGHLY CLASSIFIED AND SENSITIVE INFORMATION ON A SPECIFIC AND IMMINENT THREAT TO AIR CARRIER WHETHER ORIGINATINGFROM THIS POST OR ELSEWHERE, WE WONDER IF PRESENT PROCEDURES AS DESCRIBED PARA 2 OF REF (A), SUFFICIENTLY PROTECT SENSITIVE SOURCES AND THE INFORMATION ITSELF. SOME OF THE COMMUNICATION UNDER CURRENT PROCEDURES, AT LEAST, HAS BEEN IN THE CLEAR. THIS MODE OF COMMUNICATION COULD RESULT IN AN IMMEDIATE AND DIRECT COMPROMISE OF THE INFORMATION
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AND ITS SOURCE AT THE TIME OF TRANSMITTAL AND COULD CONTRIBUTE TO SUBSEQUENT CARELESS HANDLING OF THE INFORMATION. WITHOUT BEING EXHAUSTIVE ON THE SUBJECT, WE HAVE SEEN OR EXPERIENCED SEVERAL CASES RECENTLY IN WHICH UNNECESSARILY DETAILED INFORMATION HAS BEEN TRANSMITTED IN THE CLEAR BY TELEPHONE AND POSSIBLE BY TELEX. IN THESE CASES THESE SOURCES OF INFORMATION MAY HAVE BEEN JEOPARDIZED UNNECESSARILY. IN ONE CASE, EXTENSIVELY

DETAILED INFORMATION WAS PUBLISHED IN A ROME DAILY NEWSPAPER AND COULD HAVE REACHED THE EYES OR EARS OF THE TERRORIST GROUP REPORTEDLY PLOTTING TO BLOW UP AN AIRCRAFT. THIS SORT OF LEAK PROVIDES

USEFUL INFORMATION TO THE PLOTTERS WHICH COULD ENABLE THEM TO OVERCOME SECURITY MEASURES OR STRIKE AT THE SAME AIRLINE AT ANOTHER POINT WHICH IS NOT SO CLOSELY PROTECTED AT THE MOMENT. WE SUGGEST, THEREFORE, THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO TIGHTENING CURRENT PROCEDURES TO BETTER PROTECT INFORMATION AND SOURCES. WHILE WE DO NOT FEEL THAT WE ARE IN AN ESPECIALLY GOOD POSITION TO OFFER CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS, ONE POSSIBILITY, PERHAPS, IS TO USE U.S. EMBASSIES AND CONSULATES TO INFORM APPROPRIATE AIRLINE OFFICES OVERSEAS WHEREVER POSSIBLE RATHER THAN PASS THE INFO FROM FAA WASHINGTON THROUGH THE AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION (ATA) AND AIRLINES HEAD OFFICES AND TO THEIR OVERSEAS OFFICES. POSTS CAN INVITE AIRLINE OFFICIALS IN FOR A CONFIDENTIAL BRIEFING. ANY SUBSEQUENTLY NECESSARY TELEPHONE CALLS OR TELEXES BETWEEN AIRLINE HEAD AND OVERSEAS OFFICES COULD THEN BE MUCHMORE LIMITED.

3. AS WE OPINED IN AN EARLIER TELEGRAM WE BELIVE THAT TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND POSTS ON THREATS TO AIR CARRIERS SHOULD ALSO BE KEPT TO A MINIMUM AND IN ANY CASE SHOULD BE SUPPLEMENTED ASAP BY TELEGRAM TO CONFIRM THE ORIGINATL MESSAGE. TO AVOID MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL DETAILS. WE FULLY UNDERSTAND THAT IN EMERGENCIES IT MAY NOT ALWAYS BE CONFIDENTIAL

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POSSIBLE TO ADHERE CLOSELY TO THIS PRACTICE.

4. FINALLY,ALTHOUGH WE CONSIDER OUR HIJACK CONTINGENCY PLAN A WORKABLE ONE, WE DISCOVERED EARLY ON DURING THE 1977 LUFTHANSA HIJACKING THAT, MAINLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT MOST AIRLINES DO REQUIRE IDENTIFICATION OF PASSENGER BY NATIONALITY AND, THEREFORE, DO NOT HAVE SUCH INFORMATION ON THEIR MANIFESTS, IT IS ALL BUT IMPOSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY AMERICAN PASSENGERS ON BOARD SUCH A HIJACKED AIRCRAFT. HAS THE USG PROPOSED TO THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AIR ORGANIZATION OR TO THE INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION THAT ALL MEMBERS REQUIRE SUCH IDENTIFICATION ON PASSENGER MANIFESTS? WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN LEARNING IF SUCH A PROPOSAL HAS BEEN MADE, IF NOT, WHY,AND WHAT OBJECTIONS ARE FORESEEN TO ITS ACCEPTANCE BY ICAO.GARDNER

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